

BARRINGTON

FAQs Re: Lake Zurich Road Realignment and Route 14/ CN Grade Separation Project

In previous newsletters, I talked about the project to realign Lake Zurich Road to share the signal at the Barrington Area Library/ Berry Road intersection with Route 14. The CN underpass on Route 14 was also thoroughly discussed. The following are some answers to FAQs that have been raised since the last two newsletters were published.

Why doesn't Lake Zurich Road have its own traffic light?

U.S. Route 14 is considered a Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA) highway by the Illinois Department of Transportation. SRA requirements include meeting minimum traffic volumes and a minimum 1/4 mile spacing (1,320 feet) between traffic signals for all new signal installations. Lake Zurich Road is just 668 feet from Berry Road, approximately half the separation required by IDOT, so a second traffic light can't be installed there if the Berry Road light stays where it is.

Lake Zurich Road, with average daily traffic of 3,279 cars, exceeds the traffic threshold that would qualify for a traffic signal, but the proximity to the at-grade CN crossing and the existing Berry Road traffic signal preclude the installation of a new traffic light. That being said, Berry Road and the Library entrance drive do not currently meet the minimum threshold to qualify for a signal at only 828 cars per day.

Further complicating matters, Lake Zurich Road is less than 465 feet from the current CN at-grade railroad crossing. This fact triggers another separation requirement having to do with vehicle queuing. Traffic signals require a separation from railroad crossings equal to the maximum queue length so that a red light won't leave a vehicle stranded on the crossing when railroad gates are activated by an approaching train. Thankfully, this will become a moot point once U.S. Route 14 is grade separated, however, the close proximity to a light at Berry Road would continue to be an issue.

Why was a traffic signal installed at the Library/ Berry Road, if it didn't meet the minimum traffic threshold?

Through cooperative action, the Village of Barrington and the Library requested that IDOT grant the application for a signal at the Library/ Berry Road in the interest of public safety when the new library was being built in the late 1970's. Due to low traffic volumes, however, this traffic signal would not be permitted for a new installation today. The realignment of Lake Zurich Road provides the opportunity to allow the 3,279 vehicles traveling daily on Lake Zurich Road to share a traffic light without any negative impact on library operations, while also securing the future of the Berry Road traffic signal at its current location.

How will the realignment impact safety?

The Lake Zurich Road realignment increases safety for the cars using Lake Zurich Road by allowing them to share the traffic light at Berry Road and avoid accidents at Northwest Highway. There is an added safety benefit for library users as the post-realignment traffic circulation will not cross the path of library patrons entering or exiting the building from the parking lot and will permit handicap spaces to be located closer to the building.

Why is the Lake Zurich Road project being done now?

The Lake Zurich Road realignment has been a long-term objective of the Village and funds for the project are now available thanks to federal transportation dollars distributed based on a population formula to all fifty states each year. This federal funding is then distributed based on regional infrastructure requests that are ranked by priority. Because the Route 14/CN underpass project is now included in IDOT's plan for Route 14, it is important that this part of the overall project be completed prior to constructing the underpass to avoid an extended interruption for the 3000-plus cars traveling on Lake Zurich Road to or from Northwest Highway (that could last up to 9 months) if this section of the project is not completed in advance.

Why should there be a grade separation at the Route 14/ CN crossing?

Since CN purchased the EJ&E, the railroad has been operating under the oversight of the Surface Transportation Board. Because Barrington has been actively involved in making sure CN does what it is supposed to do, CN has worked hard to make sure that its operations do not become a major source of inconvenience in the Village. That all ends in January 2017 when the oversight is finished and we can expect CN will no longer have any incentive to avoid blocking our crossings for longer periods of time. So, first and foremost, the grade separation is needed to protect public safety by allowing for an unimpeded route to the nearest hospital. Besides being a Strategic Regional Arterial road and carrying the most vehicles per day, Route 14 is the only major arterial in town that is not crossed by the Union Pacific railroad tracks. It is also the only U.S. Highway crossed by the CN/ EJ&E that is not grade separated and – for all of these reasons and as IDOT funding has demonstrated – is an issue requiring remediation.

Isn't there a cap on the number of trains that CN can run through the Village?

Unfortunately, no. While the initial application talked about a potential number of trains that could run on the line, there is no maximum number (or length) of trains mandated by law. In addition to there being no cap on the number of trains, with a 100 – 125' of right-of-way through the Village, the railroad has plenty of room to construct additional tracks. In fact, CN demanded during the Route 14 grade separation Phase 1 environmental review that the rail bridge abutments on Route 14 be constructed to accommodate a second track.

FAQs Re: Lake Zurich Road Realignment and Route 14/ CN Grade Separation Project Continued...

Can some other entity force CN to move off its tracks or relocate to a proposed rail line in central Illinois or some other location?

No. CN owns the EJ&E rail line exclusively and has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to accommodate current and future rail traffic. The EJ&E gives CN the ability to market itself to shippers as the unique solution for bypassing the Chicago rail freight quagmire that bogs down and delays rival railroads.

Is the Village going to have to pay for the underpass?

Any monies not received from CN to fund this underpass project will be paid for entirely by state and federal transportation dollars. The Village will only be funding the \$403,317 needed for a bike path and the community-requested aesthetic enhancements identified during the community input meetings for the grade separation project.

If the federal and state funds are not spent on this project, what would the funds be used for?

Federal and state funds not spent for the Barrington transportation projects would not be going back to the taxpayers, but would be allocated elsewhere for transportation projects -- perhaps even in Chicago, which lost rail traffic and benefitted from CN's purchase of the EJ&E. It's important to understand that CN's acquisition of the EJ&E created a regional traffic congestion problem -- one that affects more than just the 10,000-plus residents of Barrington. At the four roadways in Barrington that cross the EJ&E, the combined average daily traffic count (ADT) this year is 73,851 vehicles. It is in acknowledgement of the scope of the problem, and the necessity of having this SRA relieved of freight-induced bottlenecks, that the region's elected leaders and transportation officials have decided to direct federal transportation dollars to fund the Barrington grade separation and the Lake Zurich Road realignment.

How quickly can the underpass be constructed once Lake Zurich Road is complete?

Once federal, state, and railroad funds are available, final engineering planning should take two years prior to the commencement of actual construction.

Has Barrington "sued" CN?

No. Barrington has never sued CN, but has followed the federal legal process to make its case. Barrington became a party in the process before the Surface Transportation Board when CN filed its application with that Board to purchase the EJ&E railroad in 2007. Barrington participated in the STB process before the transaction received federal approval, and then appealed the STB's final decision to the federal court.

What has the Village received in return for the money and time spent on the CN matter?

Barrington has worked tirelessly to mitigate the negative impacts of the increased train traffic on residents and commuters in the region. Thus far, the following has been achieved:

- A quiet zone at Route 59 (for which CN paid approximately \$150,000 to \$250,000)
- Noise mitigation totaling \$461,834: \$134,234 from CN and a \$327,600 Illinois Commerce Commission grant for homeowners abutting the railroad track
- \$21.9 million in Federal and State transportation funds for the combined Lake Zurich Road realignment and grade separation project

Have there been additional benefits to taxpayers as a result of Barrington's and TRAC (The Regional Answer to CN) Coalition work?

Additional benefits for taxpayers include approximately \$130 million in mitigation throughout the region paid for by CN. These are funds that relieved taxpayers from the burden of rectifying some of the problems that CN created in the region when it acquired the EJ&E.